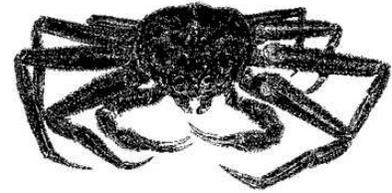


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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**BERING SEA SNOW CRAB FISHERY OPENS OCTOBER 15
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ANNOUNCED**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of NMFS trawl survey data for the Bering Sea snow crab stock. The 2008 total allowable catch is based on abundance and biomass estimates using the NMFS stock assessment model.

The total mature biomass (TMB) of male and female snow crabs in the Bering Sea of 554.5 million pounds is estimated to be above the harvest strategy minimum threshold for a fishery opening of 230.4 million pounds. The 2008/09 snow crab TAC was calculated using an exploitation rate of 15.86% applied to the mature male biomass of 369.1 million pounds. The 2008/09 snow crab total allowable catch (TAC) is apportioned as follows:

IFQ	52,695,000 pounds
CDQ	5,855,000 pounds
Total	58,550,000 pounds

The 2008/09 Bering Sea snow crab fishery will open west of 166° W long., at 12:00 noon October 15, 2008 and will remain open through May 15, 2009 in the Eastern Subdistrict and through May 31, 2009 in the Western Subdistrict. The snow crab fishery will not open in waters enclosed by 168° W long. to 170° W long. and 57° N lat. to 58° N lat. (ADF&G statistical areas 685700, 685730, 695700, and 695730) to protect the Pribilof blue king crab stock. The majority of blue king crabs captured during the 2008 survey were found in this area.

Vessel operators who are registered for the snow crab fishery and who have Tanner crab IFQ or CDQ quota may retain Tanner crabs up to 5% of the weight of the snow crab onboard the vessel and reported on an ADF&G fish ticket.

In March 2008 the Alaska Board of Fisheries repealed the pot limit and buoy tag marking requirement for this fishery.

A valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commercial Fisheries Safety Decal is required before a vessel registration is issued. Participating vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system approved by NMFS. The operator of a vessel participating in IFQ, or CDQ crab fisheries must notify the USCG at least 24-hours prior to departing port when carrying crab pot gear. USCG can be contacted at: Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, (907) 581-6738, and Kodiak, (907) 654-5588.

Preseason gear inspections will be available in Dutch Harbor, Akutan and King Cove beginning on October 10, 2008. Vessel registration will begin at 12:00 noon on October 13, 2008. An individual holding a current Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea Tanner crab interim use permit card (T91Q or T09Q) must be aboard the vessel when it is registered. Vessel operators may fish concurrently for IFQ and CDQ crab, but a separate registration and CFEC permit card is required for each fishery. At the time of registration, all pots onboard the vessel or in wet storage must be in compliance with current Bering Sea commercial snow crab fishing regulations.

Vessel operators participating in IFQ or CDQ fisheries may form gear operation cooperatives with other registered vessels. Each vessel operator must specifically list those vessels authorized to operate the vessel's gear at the time of vessel registration. A vessel operator may transport crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another vessel operator, however, the registered vessel operator of the crab pot gear has seven days to be active in the registration area where the gear was deployed. A vessel operator may make a one time transfer of all registered pot gear to another vessel operator at the completion of fishing operations.

Vessel operators shall notify the department within 72-hours of completing fishing operations in a registration area or when departing the registration area with gear in long-term storage. The Board of Fisheries established a 14-day period when unbaited gear may be stored outside of designated storage areas after fishing is completed. Pots must be removed from the water or placed in long-term storage if left unattended in a registration area for more than a 14-day period. Additionally, a vessel operator's registration will be invalidated after 14-days of inactivity in a registration area.

For questions regarding issuance of quota share and IFQ/IPQ, contact NOAA Fisheries RAM Division at 1-800-304-4846 (option #2). For questions regarding federal Crab Rationalization Program regulations, contact NOAA Fisheries Sustainable Fisheries Division at (907) 586-7228 or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement in Kodiak at (907) 486-3298 or Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-2061. For further information on state management contact the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239 or in Kodiak, at (907) 486-1840.

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